

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, today, March 16th, I was detained in my district and therefore missed the three rollcall votes of the day. Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 125 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 987—to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 601 8th Street in Freedom, Pennsylvania, as the "John Scott Challis, Jr. Post Office". Had I been present I would have also voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 126 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 1217—to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 15455 Manchester Road in Ballwin, Missouri, as the "Specialist Peter J. Navarro Post Office Building." Lastly, had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 127 on agreeing to the resolution H.R. 1284—to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 103 West Main Street in McLain, Mississippi, as the "Major Ed W. Freeman Post Office."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from this Chamber today. I would like the RECORD to show that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 125, 126, and 127.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, today, I was unexpectedly detained in my district due to a flight delay and missed three votes. If present, I would have voted: "yea" on H.R. 987; "yea" on H.R. 1217; and "yea" on H.R. 1284.

SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON WILL LEAD ROBUST HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Secretary Clinton called the President of Sri Lanka to express deep concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in northern Sri Lanka. She stated clearly that the army should not fire on civilians, that international organizations should have full access to the thousands of people trapped inside the conflict area, and she condemned the Tamil Tigers for their atrocities. It was a strong human rights statement.

Last Wednesday, Secretary Clinton stood up for the rights of women when she hosted the 2009 International Women of Courage Awards. She noted those women whose governments kept them from traveling to Washington to receive this honor.

She also met with the Chinese Foreign Minister. She told him that every nation seeking to lead in the inter-

national community must live by the global rules that determine whether people enjoy the right to live freely and participate fully, including the freedom to speak out, to worship, and to live and work with dignity.

Secretary Clinton is committed to a strong human rights agenda, and I look forward to working with her and promoting human rights in U.S. foreign policy.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
OFFICE OF THE SPOKESMAN,
MARCH 13, 2009.

STATEMENT BY GORDON DUGUID, ACTING
DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

On March 13, Secretary Clinton called Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa to express the United States' deep concern over the deteriorating conditions and increasing loss of life occurring in the Government of Sri Lanka-designated "safe zone" in northern Sri Lanka. The Secretary stated that the Sri Lankan Army should not fire into the civilian areas of the conflict zone. The Secretary offered immediate and post-conflict reconstruction assistance and she extended condolences to the victims of the March 10 bombing outside a mosque in southern Sri Lanka. She condemned the actions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are reported to be holding civilians as human shields, and to have shot at civilians leaving LTTE areas of control.

Secretary Clinton called on President Rajapaksa to devise a political solution to the ongoing conflict. She urged the President to give international humanitarian relief organizations full access to the conflict area and displaced persons camps, including screening centers.

The United States believes that a durable and lasting peace will only be achieved through a political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all of Sri Lanka's communities. We call on the Sri Lankan Government to put forward a proposal now to engage Tamils who do not espouse violence or terrorism, and to develop power sharing arrangements so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved.

(March 11, 2009)

2009 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE
AWARDS

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, SECRETARY OF
STATE, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ROOM, WASH-
INGTON, DC

Secretary Clinton: Well, this is such an exciting occasion, and there were so many people who wanted to come today, but unfortunately, there is a limit to how many people we can let into this magnificent room. So there are people watching on closed-circuit TV all over this building, and beyond.

And it is my pleasure to welcome you to the State Department to celebrate International Women's Day with a very special event and a very special guest. The event is the International Women of Courage Awards, and in a minute, you will meet these remarkable women and learn more about their lives and their work. And I am especially delighted to thank one person in particular whose presence here means a great deal to all of us—our First Lady, Michelle Obama. (Applause.)

Now, I know a little bit about the role that—(laughter)—Michelle Obama is filling now. And I have to say that in a very short time, she has, through her grace and her wisdom, become an inspiration to women and girls not only in the United States, but around the world. And it is so fitting that

she would join us here at the State Department to celebrate the achievements of other extraordinary women, and to show her commitment to supporting women and girls around the globe.

She understands, as we all do here at the State Department, that the status of women and girls is a key indicator of whether or not progress is possible in a society. And so I am very grateful to her and to President Obama, who earlier today announced the creation of the White House Interagency Council on Women and Girls. That will—(applause). That office will help us collaborate across every department and agency in our government.

President Obama has also designated an ambassador-at-large to consolidate our work on women's global issues here at the State Department. Now, this is a position that has never existed before, and I am very pleased that someone you all know, if you have ever worked on women's issues—know and appreciate a longtime colleague and friend, Melanne Verwee, who's been nominated to fill that post. (Applause.)

And I also want to thank Ambassador Susan Rice and our excellent U.S. delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which is in the middle of its annual meetings now, for the work that they are doing and for the engagement that they demonstrate.

Today, we're focusing on the International Women of Courage Awards. It's a fairly new tradition here at the State Department, but it's already become a cherished institution. For the past three years, our embassies have sent us stories of extraordinary women who work every day, often against great odds to advance the rights of all human beings to fulfill their God-given potential. Today, we recognize eight of those women. Each is one of a kind, but together they represent countless women and men who strive daily for justice and opportunity in every country and on every continent, usually without recognition or reward.

And I want to say a special word about someone who could not join us, who we honor today—Reem Al Numery, who was forced to marry her older cousin when she was just 12 years old. She is now fighting to obtain a divorce for herself and end child marriage in Yemen. She was not able to be here, but we honor her strength and we pledge our support to end child marriage everywhere, once and for all. (Applause.)

We also express our solidarity with women whose governments have forbidden them from joining us, especially Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been kept under house arrest in Burma for most of the past two decades, but continues to be a beacon of hope and strength to people around the world. Her example has been especially important to other women in Burma who have been imprisoned for their political beliefs, driven into exile, or subjected to sexual violence by the military.

Our honorees and the hundreds of millions of women they represent not only deserve our respect, they deserve our full support. When we talk about human rights, what I think of are faces like these. What I am committed to is doing everything in my power as Secretary of State to further the work on the ground in countries like those represented here to make changes in peoples' lives. That doesn't happen always in the halls of government. It happens day to day in the towns and cities, the villages and countryside where the work of human rights goes on.

We simply cannot solve the global problems confronting us, from a worldwide financial crisis to the risks of climate change to chronic hunger, disease, and poverty that sap the energies and talents of hundreds of